reaches them. Before payment of the benefits, the 'next of kin' is asked to open a single bank account. Thereafter, Pension, Gratuity, *ex-gratia* and other entitlements from Government of India are paid into the single bank account of the 'next of kin'. However, ensuring safety against possible threat to their life and property is the responsibility of the State Government concerned.

High level talks between India and Russia

4175. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM :
SHRI KA. RA. SUBBIAN :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the high-level talks between India and Russia during the Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister's visit to India from November 20-23, 2000;

(b) whether the common threats to cross border terrorism and drug trafficking in the region emanating from Afghanistan were discussed;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the details of the subjects discussed during the last Indo-Russian Joint Working Group on Afghanistan ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH) : (a) India and Russia had decided to set up a Joint Working Group on Afghanistan during the visit of His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation to India on October 2-5, 2000. The first meeting of the group was held in New Delhi on November 20-21, 2000. The Russian delegation was led by H.E. Mr. V. Trubnikov, First Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation. During this meeting both sides reviewed the situation prevailing in Afghanistan in all its dimensions.

(b) and (c) India and Russia noted that the Taliban controlled areas of Afghanistan had become centres for training, promotion and shelter of international terrorists. The two sides also recognised that the Taliban controlled areas of Afghanistan had become the largest producers of opium in the world. They called upon the Taliban to stop the illegal production of opium. Both sides agreed to continue their cooperation at the bilateral level as well multilaterally to address the threat of terrorism and illegal narcotics emanating from Afghanistan.

(d) During the last meeting of the Indo-Russian Joint Working Group on Afghanistan, which was held in Moscow on June 25-26, 2001, in-depth discussions were held on the issues pertaining to the situation in Afghanistan and around it. These included issues of Taliban held areas in Afghanistan having become nerve centres and breeding ground for terrorists and separatist forces, narcotics and extremist ideologies; the need for effective implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions No. 1267 and No. 1333 and end of foreign interference in Afghan Affairs; unacceptability of discriminatory policies of the Taliban in particular the recent Taliban decree, prescribing distinctive dress code and wearing of distinguishing marks for Afghan Hindus and Sikhs, and importance of coordinated international cooperation for reducing the fall out and eventually for the elimination of negative forces of terrorism, narcotics and extremist ideologies emanating from the Talitan held areas in Afghanistan. The two sides agreed to continue close cooperation at the bilateral level as well as multilaterally to address the threats of terrorist forces, narco-terrorism and extremist ideologies emanating from the Taliban held areas in Afghanistan.

Regional Organisation to combat militancy

4176. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the press report appearing on page 13 of the 'Hindustan Times' dated 16th June, 2001 that leaders of China, Russia and four Central Asian States have launched a new regional organisation to combat ethnic and religious militancy including Islamic militancy and jointly crack down on terrorist, separatist and extremist elements; and

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto and whether Government propose to collaborate in these efforts or to form their own forum by seeking cooperation from neighbouring countries ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH) : (a) Yes, Sir. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) was established at the Summit of the Heads of States of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on 14-15 June, 2001 in Shanghai, China. In the declaration on the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation the member States agreed to cooperate in dealing with terrorism, separatism and extremism including the establishment of an anti-terrorist centre in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. At the Summit, the member States also